



Address delivered to St Mary's College Assembly

by

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Salutations:

Create the boldest, grandest vision for your life, because you become what you believe!

Once upon a time there was a boy from Belmont. He was diagnosed with sickle cell anaemia which means he did not have enough healthy red blood cells to carry adequate oxygen throughout his body. As a boy, and an adult, it meant that he had to battle episodes of intense pain, constant fatigue, and other painful symptoms. There is no cure. His life could have gone nowhere. But, instead, he took the drive and the tenacity he learned right here at CIC, and at home, and he went to Howard University to pursue his dream of becoming a physician.

That man is Dr Wayne Frederick. He is the current President of Howard University and the man named one of America's best physicians. He was determined to rise above his condition and help others through excelling as a man of medicine.



What drives you? Today, we are going to try and find out. Because, if you are willing to be just good - you will never be great. I encourage you to instead have the boldest, grandest vision for yourself and your life. Be willing to work to be great, and you will achieve your full potential!

FIND YOUR PASSION!

Today, you are receiving an education from one of the region's leading colleges - St Mary's College. Understand, clearly, that success requires a commitment to continuous improvement and going beyond the expected. All of you now in 6th Form can progress to tertiary level education and beyond, and some of you will have shining careers that will take you to the top of your area of endeavour to make your mark on the world. You will join that august body of men in the St. Mary's College Hall of Fame.

But you can only excel if you have a passion. Education confers on you a responsibility to seek out what you are passionate about! It does not matter whether it is unique and unprecedented, or one of the usual professions - in my case it was Law and an MBA.

Select subject areas you love and that excite you...not simply subjects you are able to do.

Whether it is art, medicine, accounting, sport or business, follow an academic path that leads to something you love to do, something which is relevant, uplifting and meaningful. Immerse yourself in it and have fun while doing so. Do it thoroughly, and do it with excellence!

SEIZE OPPORTUNITIES!

Gentlemen, all of you can succeed if you are prepared to work to the highest standards. Some of you may not be as successful as you would like after exam time. A few may even be severely set back. Don't be disheartened. Instead, use your results as an opportunity for reflection and introspection. Ponder why you did not achieve as well as you hoped you would. Is it your study habits or lack thereof? Are you gaming when you should be using the computer for research?

Is it mis-management of your time? Is it the girls? Or is it something else? No two of us are the same, and we all have different challenges. Keshorn Walcott grew up in Toco - a fishing village. He had a talent for pelting mangoes with a stick, and the star in his family was his athletic older brother. Keshorn did not pick up a javelin until he was 15. He did not have the benefit of top coaches and facilities.

It only took him one (1) year of absolute commitment to the sport to become the Caribbean youth champion.

Four (4) years later, he became the youngest Olympic Gold Medallist in Men's Javelin and he is from Trinidad and Tobago.

All of you who face challenges can overcome them in one way or another. Let Keshorn's resilience be your inspiration to confront and beat your challenges.

At some time or another, some of you may have been criticised by teachers or your parents – when they were particularly frustrated with you! When they knew that you were not realising your fullest potential! They may have told you that you do not have what it takes.



Consider Michael Dell – CEO of Dell Computers, a Fortune 500 Company. You have heard of Dell Computers, right? As a child, Michael Dell was told that he would not amount to anything special. By the time he was 24, Inc Magazine had named him *Entrepreneur of the Year*. Today, at the age of 50, Michael Dell's personal wealth is us \$20.1 billion, and he is ranked on the Forbes List of the world's richest men.

Consider a fellow with the very ordinary name of Fred Smith. He was crippled by bone disease when he was very young, but overcame it to become an excellent football player. While attending Yale, he wrote a paper for an economics class, outlining overnight delivery service in the computer information age.

He got a 'C'. That paper became the business plan for the company he started – *Fedex* - which is a global, multi-billion dollar brand. So pervasive is the brand, we no longer courier documents, we *Fedex* them.

Life is about stick-to-it-iveness. Yesterday's failure or success is history. Tomorrow offers other opportunities. When the chance presents itself, be ready to grab it!

CIC, as an institution, has always inculcated a philosophy of critical thinking, of questioning assumptions, of independent thought, strong intellect and character. The school's motto is *virtus et scientia* (**wir-tus et ski-en-tia**). This means, as you know, that moral integrity and academic excellence go hand in hand. These are the measure of a man. These are core values that have in many ways shaped my own life and have been responsible for my success I have enjoyed thus far. It is incumbent on all of you to embrace and reinforce these ideals, this culture.

HABITS AND VALUES!

The world of work – the real world – is still far away in the distance for most of you. You would be aware that the economy has been going through a very painful readjustment. The latest figures from the World Bank show annual GDP growth contracting to -2.3%.

This contraction will be painful, long and difficult. It is important therefore for you to inculcate the right habits and values from now which you will take on the road to success.

Understand that Trinidad and Tobago is a tiny part of the global community in which we have to survive. Technology has made the world very small and flat. Your peers are not just the guys standing around you in this Hall. They are students in the USA, in Asia and India, in Europe. You cannot compete out there by winging it and extemporising, and you cannot compete in here by doing that either. Unfortunately, the world is a brutal place and only the fittest will thrive - fittest of mind, spirit and body.

We live at a time when Trinidad and Tobago is at risk from declining morals and ethics. We have substituted traditional values for shortcuts, expediency and compromise. But that road is full of risks!

Young people often feel they are invincible. HIV may no longer be the death sentence it once was, but it is life threatening and a difficult burden to bear. 3,500 young people are infected today. The diversity and accessibility of drugs is more prevalent than ever. Research shows that 75% of students in this country indicate they started drinking at the age of 13 - some as young as 9.

But you must be different! You have the ability to provide powerful examples to your peers. You must be good mentors and exemplars. Be outstanding ambassadors.

Reach out to fellow students who may be tempted by the short-term gains of drugs, risky sexual behaviour or crime and say "eh! Don't do that!" "it has no future!"

The sustainable development and future of our nation lies in the hands of your generation. Gentlemen, manhood is not about grand-charging or posturing. It is about character, maturity and responsible behaviour.

PATH TO SUCCESS!



So what are some specific lessons I have learnt and would recommend to you? I was where you were not too long ago. Well, ok, quite a long time ago! There are five (5) basic commandments I have used in my own life.

1. Work hard and work smart

Successful people have one thing in common: they work hard, consistently, and long. No quick fix! They know their business better than anyone else.

They understand the importance of paying attention to details; that's where the battle is won. They are always well-prepared. Consider some well-known sons of the soil, people whose names should be familiar to you: *Ken Gordon, Michael Jay Williams, Fr. Michel de Verteuil, Professor Emeritus Arnold Rampersad, Brigadier General Joseph L. Theodore* (deceased). Every man on the CIC Hall of Fame is an example of this approach to work.

There is no recipe for overnight success. Whether in sport, business, education or whatever, master your craft, and that will translate into long term financial success. Master areas that are difficult and complex and you will be richly rewarded.

2. Develop a winning attitude

Success will hinge on your attitude and your approach. Academic achievement is no guarantee for success. Tact, diplomacy and a smile are more powerful weapons than showing frustration or anger, steupsing and gesticulating. See opportunities in the face of obstacles. Take a flexible, innovative approach to challenges. Conduct yourself in such a way that, when a difficult situation is resolved, everyone will say “he acquitted himself with poise and dignity”.

A solutions-oriented approach is not a sign of weakness. On the contrary, it shows character, courage and conviction. A winning attitude and a generous spirit will create a memorable reputation that will amplify your chances for success. At the end of your life, all you will have is your reputation. That will be a valuable legacy for your children.

3. Integrity is key

Gentlemen, you have heard that “a little knowledge is a dangerous thing?” Even more dangerous is great knowledge without principles. Some politicians spend millions to create an image which frequently turns to dust because it is devoid of principle at defining moments. Define yourself by the quality of your character. In a world surrounded by unethical behaviour, dare to be different! It is possible to succeed without the loss of integrity. Have courage – show character! *Virtus et scientia* (**wir-tus et ski-en-tia**)!

4. Be entrepreneurial

Expand your imagination about what is possible and dare to be different. Many of us have pre-determined career paths. We are moulded to believe that a successful life means getting a stable job and working hard at it.

Tomorrow's environment requires a different model.

My advice - develop an entrepreneurial spirit and a desire to create your own future. Learn about business and develop a passion for whatever you do; any of the great business organisations we see today have been developed by simple people, with simple ideas but great vision.

Progress is made by doing unusual things – taking the path less travelled. Bill Gates did it. Walt Disney did it. Clive Pantin did it - and so, too, can you. Start right now!

Eliminate negative statements and negative self-talk. They become self-fulfilling prophecies. Set your goals. Visualise them. Believe them and go after them. Success means creating a state of mind that allows you to achieve your dreams.

One more story, as I am drawing to an end. On July 24th all of us at NGC, and quite a few prominent citizens, celebrated a very important anniversary. It was the 40th year after Hasely Crawford won T&T's first ever Olympic Gold medal for the 100m sprint in the 1976 Montreal Olympics. Hasely was the rank outsider, the dark horse, the unknown quantity. The race commentator was - the now infamous - OJ Simpson, who scornfully dismissed Hasely with the words: "who he?" In 10.06 seconds, Hasely Crawford showed the *world* "who he", indeed! Awaken the giant sleeping inside of you. Dare to be great!

5. Learn the value of team

A hallmark of this great institution has been the capacity for students to rally together, share ideas, support each other and build on each other's talents to succeed. That is what great team spirit is all about.

If you don't believe me listen to Michael Jordan: "there are plenty of teams in every sport that have great players and never win titles".

Most of the time those players are not willing to sacrifice for the greater good of the team. The funny thing is, in the end, their unwillingness to sacrifice only makes individual goals more difficult to achieve."

I believe to the fullest that if you think and achieve as a team, the individual accolades will take care of themselves. As Michael says, "talent wins games, but teamwork and intelligence wins championships."

Gentlemen, I thank you for giving me your attention. I wish you every success in your future!

On, on

Fearless and strong

Go the boys of St. Mary's College

Glorious throng...

Loyal sons of the old white and blue

Brave hearts and true

Write her name in triumphant story

Onward march on

Boys of CIC to glory.

End